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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOLDING).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 15, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE E. B. HOLDING to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

SENIOR HUNGER IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, for the past 2 months, I have been speaking each week about hunger in America. Today, I want to focus on hunger among our senior citizens, which is a silent scourge in our Nation.

Over 49 million Americans are hungry; and of those, 8.3 million are seniors. That's one in seven seniors and nearly 15 percent of everyone over 60 years old. In fact, from 2001 to 2009,

hunger among Americans over the age of 50 increased by nearly 80 percent—80 percent. That is unconscionable.

One reason for this significant rise in senior hunger is the economy. The recession has made hunger in America worse for everyone, and it's been particularly bad among people between the ages of 50 and 59, a population too young for Social Security and Medicare, but too old for programs that target families with children. And it's not just the very poor. In fact, between 2007 and 2009, the most dramatic increase in hunger was among those whose annual incomes were twice the poverty line.

Food—good, healthy food—is important at all ages, but it is critical for young children and for senior citizens. For kids, nutritious food is critical for physical and mental development. For seniors, good, healthy food is critical for entirely different, but no less important, reasons.

Hunger can exacerbate existing medical conditions, and many medications need to be taken with food. Taking some medicine on an empty stomach can result in illness or hospitalization, problems that not only result in increased medical costs, but can also be deadly to people with reduced immune systems.

A common problem is that many seniors are homebound, unable to travel to grocery stores or food banks to get food. A homebound senior can be a forgotten senior. It's easy to see why senior hunger is a hidden problem. In many cases, the hungry senior is literally hidden away behind a closed door.

That's why it is so important to have senior advocacy groups like AARP, the National Council on Aging, and AmpleHarvest.org—to name a few—who focus on senior hunger. AARP has its Drive to End Hunger campaign with NASCAR and Jeff Gordon. The National Council on Aging is working with Feeding America and other food

banks to prioritize and target hunger among seniors. AmpleHarvest.org is working with seniors to grow their own food. And of course, there is Meals on Wheels, which delivers food directly to homebound seniors.

A recent Brown University report found that for every additional \$25 a State spends on Meals on Wheels each year for a person over 65, the low-care nursing home population decreases by 1 percent. That helps save Medicaid dollars and lowers health care costs overall.

In fact, the cost of feeding a senior for 1 year through Meals on Wheels is roughly equal to the cost of just 1 day in the hospital. And the average patient stays in the hospital for almost 5 days. Funding for Meals on Wheels is an important investment to decreasing health care spending.

I also want to highlight the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, which helps more than 860,000 seniors who make less than \$15,000 per year to have access to local fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. A qualified senior is awarded between \$20 and \$50 to spend at their local farmers markets. Over 19,000 farmers participate and benefit from the money seniors spend through this program.

Wholesome Wave is an organization that doubles the purchasing power of the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Its Double Value Coupon program operates at more than 300 farmers markets in 26 States and the District of Columbia. Boston Mayor Tom Menino has a similar program called the Boston Bounty Bucks. These programs allow low-income seniors on fixed incomes to buy more fresh fruits and vegetables with their limited funds.

Mr. Speaker, these are terrific programs, but they simply can't do it all. In the case of senior hunger, we need to make sure that groups like Meals on Wheels and programs like Senior

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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